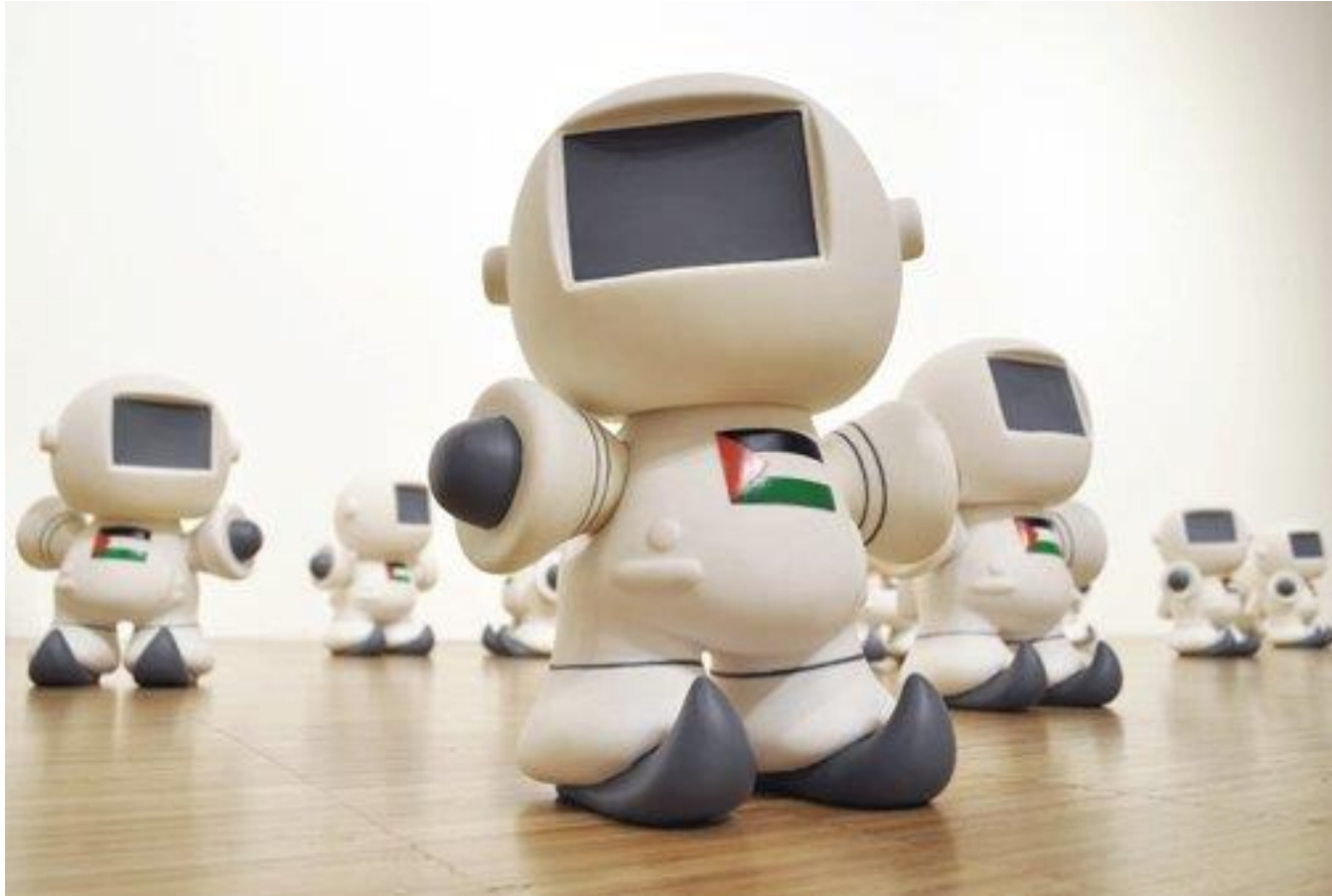


Contemporary Art and Geopolitics in the Arab World

Seminar 1: Overview of Artistic
Practices and of the Arts
Infrastructure in the Arab World

[Larissa Sansour](#) (Bethlehem, Denmark)



Palestinants, from the installation 'A Space Odyssey' 2008

“In the case of Palestine, there seems to be an eternal sense of forecasting statehood, independence and the end of the occupation. The ambitious ideas we hope to achieve have become so repetitive that the odd mix of nostalgia and self-congratulation that the sci-fi genre often embodies lends itself well to the topic.”



Larissa Sansour: Nation Estate, proposal for the Swiss Lacoste Elysée art prize 2011. She made the shortlist of the prize, the work to be shown at the Musée de l'Elysée in Lausanne.



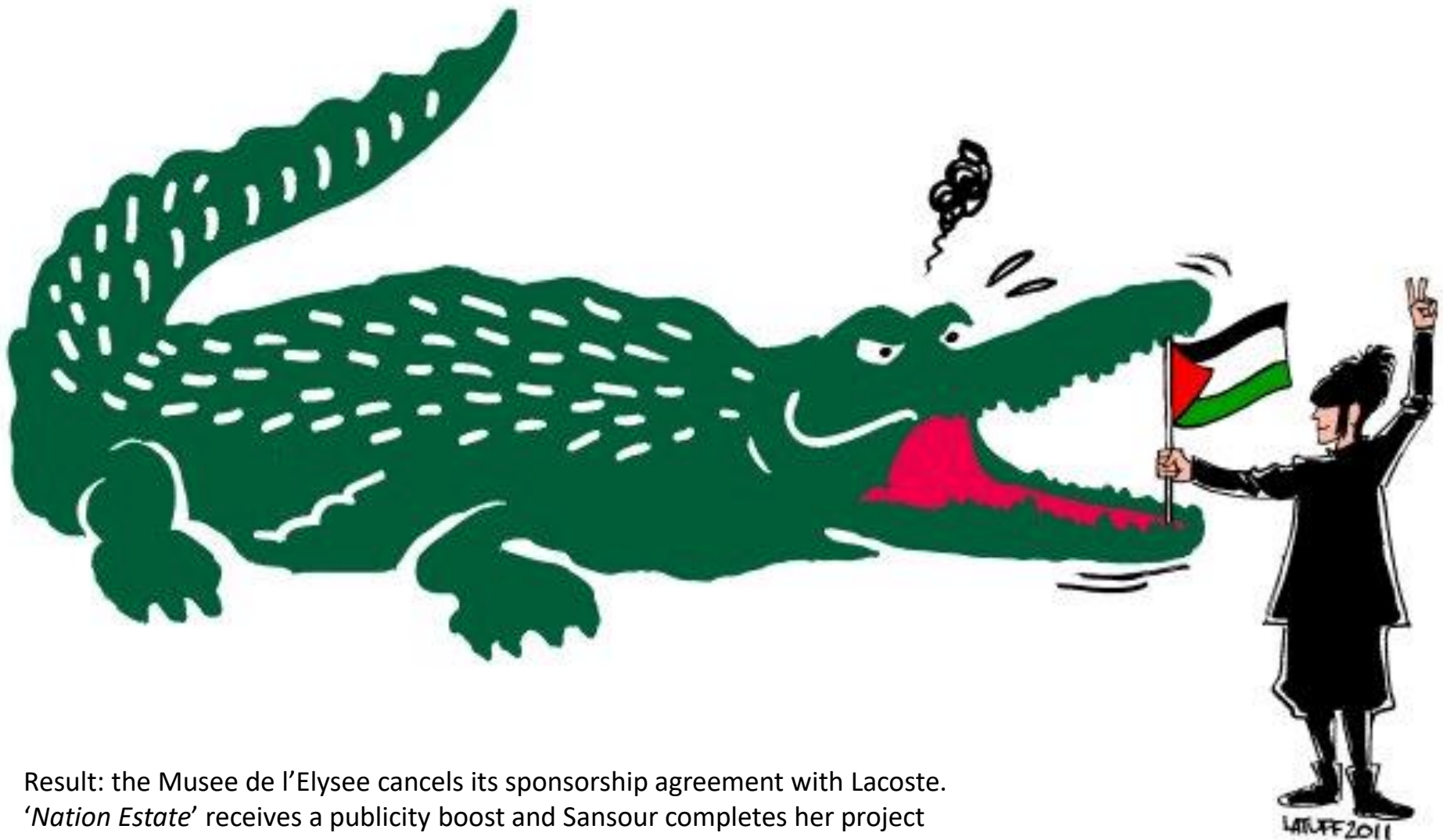
“With Israeli settlements leaving very little land for a future Palestine, I decided to explore a vertical solution to statehood . . . Intercity trips previously marred by checkpoints are now made by elevator.”





BY- MOHAMMED AL HAWAJRI

Lacoste threatened with withdrawing its sponsorship of this prize because of the allegedly 'too pro-Palestinian' character of Sansour's artwork



Result: the Musee de l'Elysee cancels its sponsorship agreement with Lacoste.
'Nation Estate' receives a publicity boost and Sansour completes her project

Sharif Waked (Haifa)
Chic Point



**Tashweesh
(Ramallah)**



Basel Abbas & Ruanne Abou Rahme: The Zone (Ramallah 2011)

... the construction of a consumerist regime out of the remains of an aborted Palestinian struggle (...) we wanted to focus on what happened after this failure: the transformation of the PLO into an 'authority' and eventually a 'security' regime.

(...) this new regime displaced the old collective 'dreams' and gave birth to new political discourses and desires, largely centered on consumption.



“Here, new lifestyles, desires, senses of self mingle and collide with a persistent denial of the disasters of Palestine’s current situation.”

معقول.. أربح بيت



بات التوفير (مفاتيح أحلامك)

ت فرصتك بالفوز
على كافة أنواع حسابات التوفير

She has no boundaries



The PLO discourse and propaganda art ...



يوم الأرض ٣٠ آذار مارس



شعار الانتفاضة: أبو عمار قائدنا

...remain a visual reference, but with a new message

“Your ambitions cannot be constrained... Jawwal: say no to the impossible”



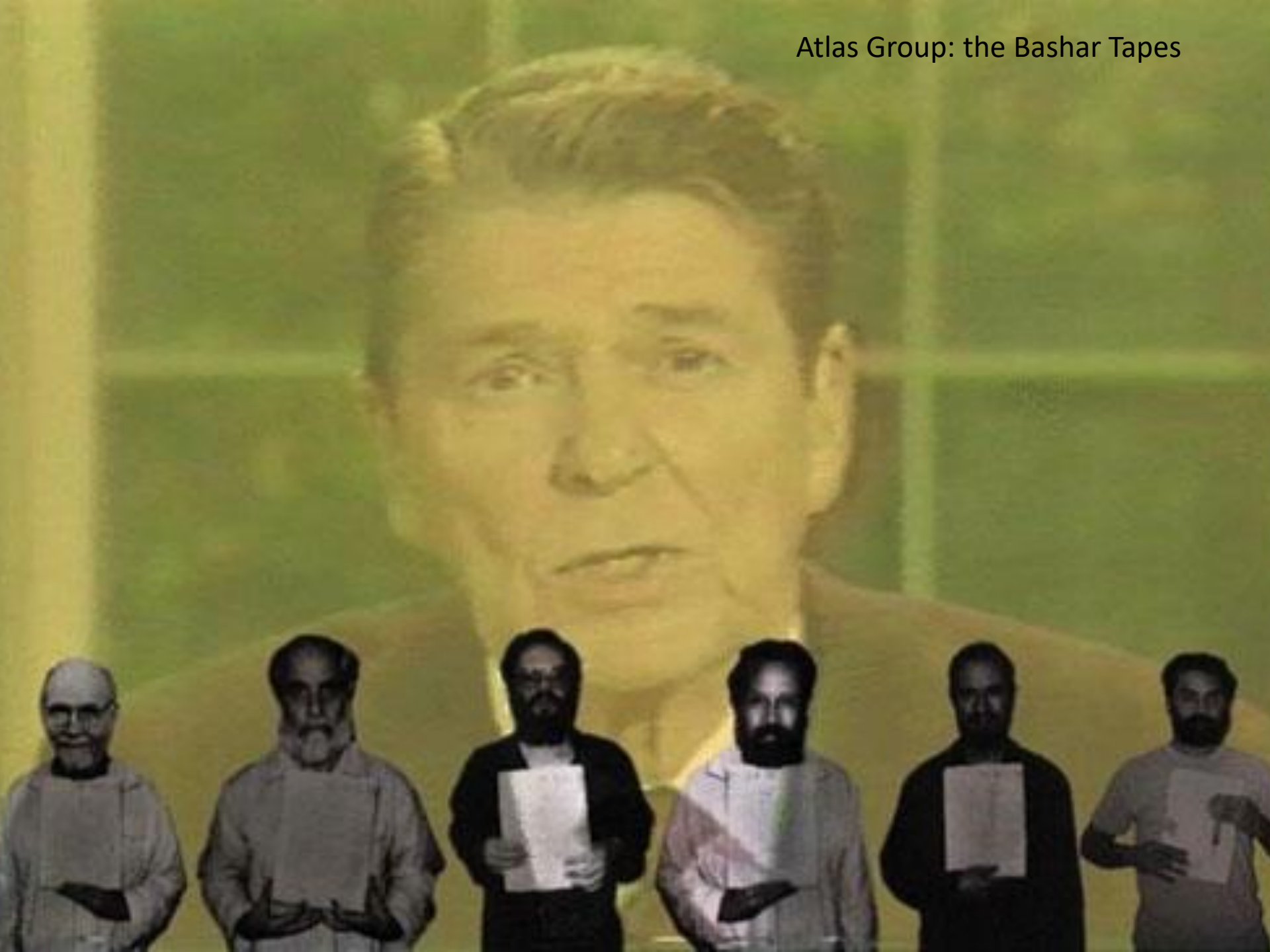
Basel Abbas & Ruanne Abou Rahme: The Zone



?!

Not an Israeli settlement but a new Palestinian neighborhood

“In what would appear to us as one of the darkest moments in Palestinian lived history, a ‘dream-world’ has somehow emerged in the West Bank: a host of commodified desires, semblance of normality, have been constructed atop the debris of political failure and collapse.”





№ 55

٥/٢٢/٨٥

سيارة مسجلة ٥٥٠٠ كيلو و ١٧١٠ كيلومتر من الفيلدون انترنا
تخصص في مجال الترخيص من دائرة مطرما جهان ١٥٠٠ متر
قد المصير المستقر زمن العينة ٥٠٠٠ كيلومتر مادة Kexpen
سجل في سبيلها فخرية رتبة اعطواتها.



№ 56

٧/١٨/٨٥

أخرت سيارة فخرية من سبيلها
بعد ان سبقها من اقتسام الشركة
السيارة من سبيلها
٧/١٨/٨٥
سيارة مسجلة ٥٥٠٠ كيلو و ١٧١٠ كيلومتر من الفيلدون انترنا
تخصص في مجال الترخيص من دائرة مطرما جهان ١٥٠٠ متر
قد المصير المستقر زمن العينة ٥٠٠٠ كيلومتر مادة Kexpen
سجل في سبيلها فخرية رتبة اعطواتها.



№ 57

٧/١٨/٨٥
سيارة مسجلة ٥٥٠٠ كيلو و ١٧١٠ كيلومتر من الفيلدون انترنا
تخصص في مجال الترخيص من دائرة مطرما جهان ١٥٠٠ متر
قد المصير المستقر زمن العينة ٥٠٠٠ كيلومتر مادة Kexpen
سجل في سبيلها فخرية رتبة اعطواتها.



№ 58

٧/١٨/٨٥
سيارة مسجلة ٥٥٠٠ كيلو و ١٧١٠ كيلومتر من الفيلدون انترنا
تخصص في مجال الترخيص من دائرة مطرما جهان ١٥٠٠ متر
قد المصير المستقر زمن العينة ٥٠٠٠ كيلومتر مادة Kexpen
سجل في سبيلها فخرية رتبة اعطواتها.

Alwaa

№ 59

بكرة هدية من سبيلها
على العينة. هدية هدية مع سبيلها
بكرة هدية من سبيلها
على العينة. هدية هدية مع سبيلها
بكرة هدية من سبيلها
على العينة. هدية هدية مع سبيلها



№ 60

٧/١٨/٨٥
سيارة مسجلة ٥٥٠٠ كيلو و ١٧١٠ كيلومتر من الفيلدون انترنا
تخصص في مجال الترخيص من دائرة مطرما جهان ١٥٠٠ متر
قد المصير المستقر زمن العينة ٥٠٠٠ كيلومتر مادة Kexpen
سجل في سبيلها فخرية رتبة اعطواتها.



№ 63



٧/١٨/٨٥
سيارة مسجلة ٥٥٠٠ كيلو و ١٧١٠ كيلومتر من الفيلدون انترنا
تخصص في مجال الترخيص من دائرة مطرما جهان ١٥٠٠ متر
قد المصير المستقر زمن العينة ٥٠٠٠ كيلومتر مادة Kexpen
سجل في سبيلها فخرية رتبة اعطواتها.

№ 64



The Atlas Group (Walid Raad)

Rabih Mroué (Beirut): Three Posters



Rabih Mroué: Je veux voir (2008)





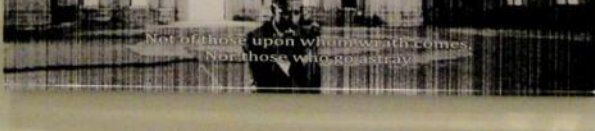
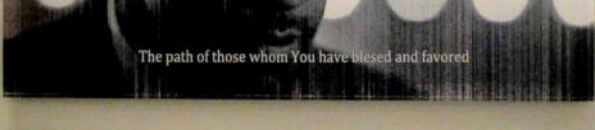
Khalil Joreige & Joana Hadjithomas: A Letter Can Always Reach Its Destination, 2012

Ayman Yossri Daydban (Saudi Arabia)



You're a coward!

أنت جبان!



With the name Allah, the Beneficent
The praise belongs to Allah the
The Beneficent, The Merciful
The Master of the Day of Judgment
You alone we worship, and
You we call upon for assistance
Guide us u on the Straight Path
the path of those whom You ha
Not of those upon whom wrath c
Nor those who go astray

Wafaa Bilal (Iraq, USA)
Shoot an Iraqi (2007)

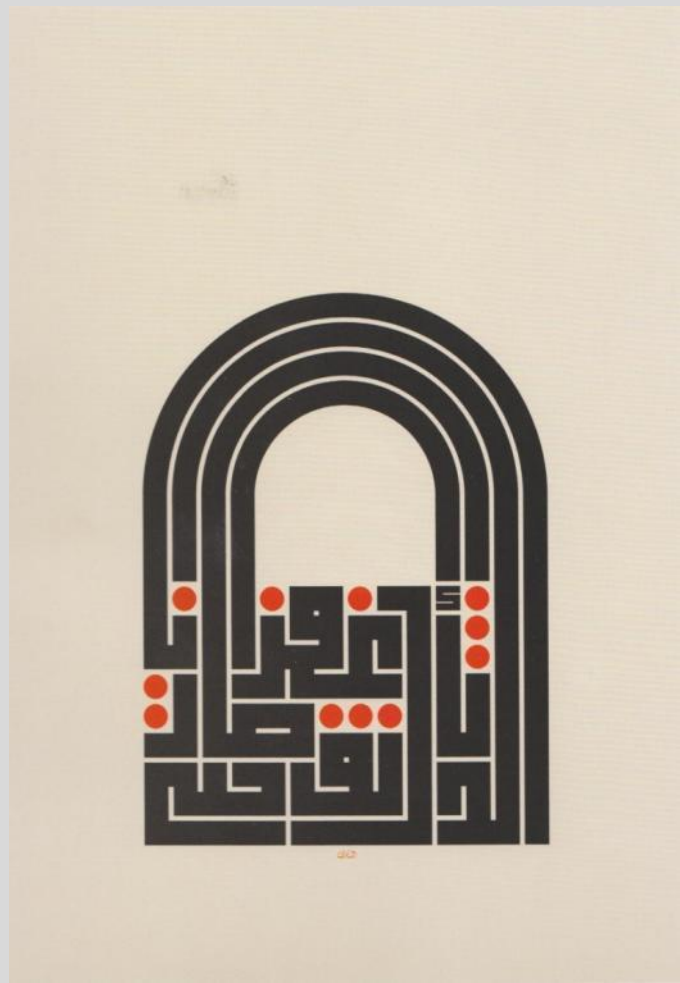
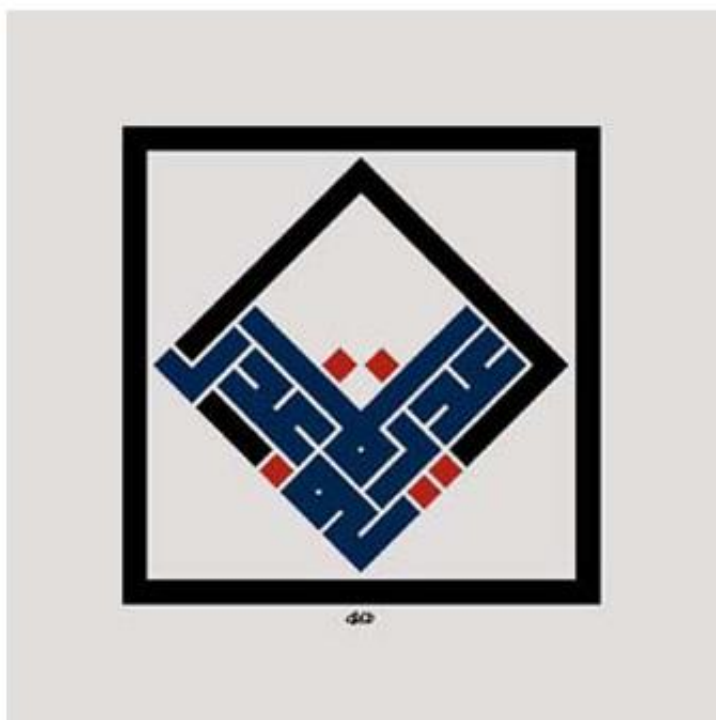


Wafaa Bilal: Virtual Jihadi (2008)



Wafaa Bilal hacked a game previously hacked by Al Qaeda (Quest for Saddam) and inserted his own character into it to avenge his brother. The art project was censored by the Art space in NY where it was scheduled to be shown

**Mouneer al Shaarani
(Syria)**



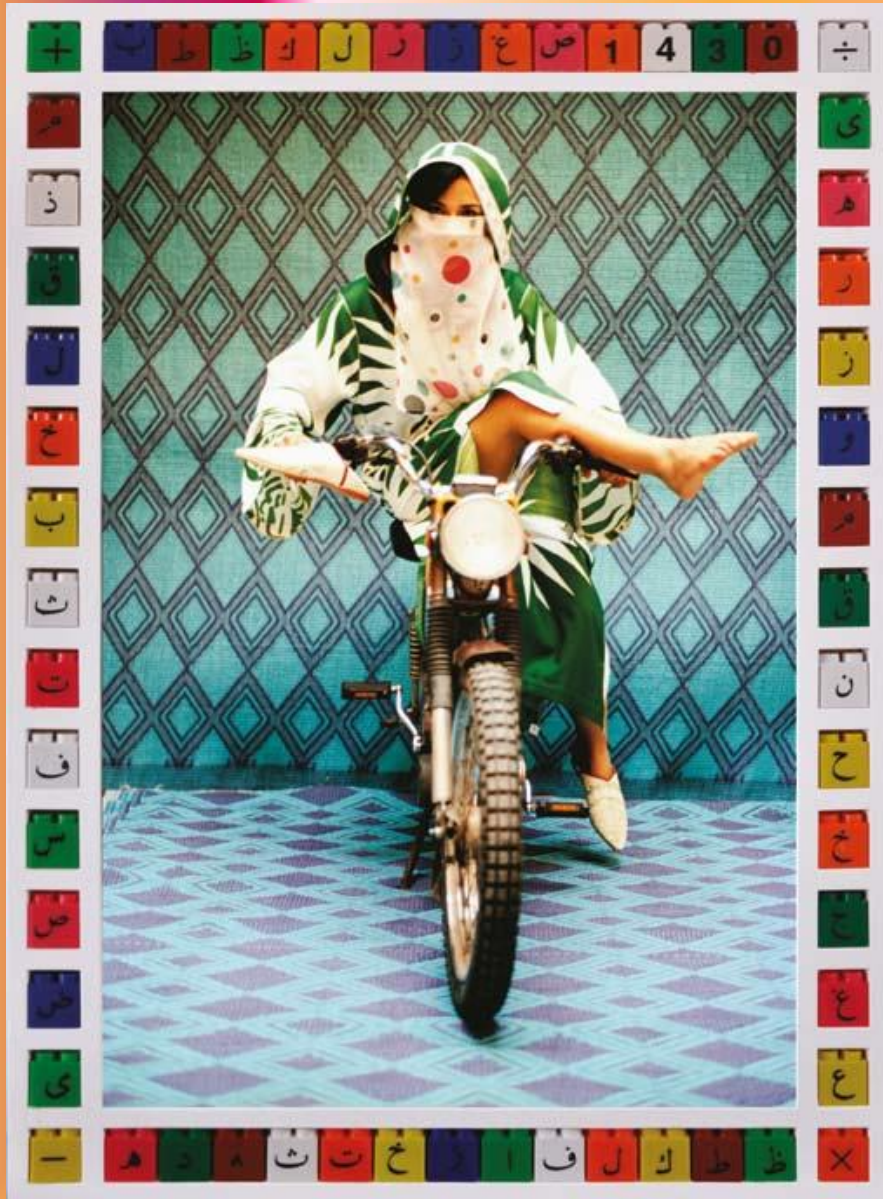


El Seed (Tunisia, Canada)



El Seed, Jara Mosque, Gabes, Tunisia, 2013. The inscription reads: 'Oh humankind, we have created you from a male and a female and made people and tribes so you may know each other.'

Hassan Hajjaj (Morocco, London)



Fatima al Qadiri & Khalid al Gharaballi (Kuwait, New York)

بني
عيش





هاي

ورق صحي ناعم أبيض

Mi

White and Soft
Tissue
200 x 2 ply

مقاس الورق : 220 x 210



Shurooq Amin (Kuwait): Harem in Heaven (from the series: It's a Man's World)



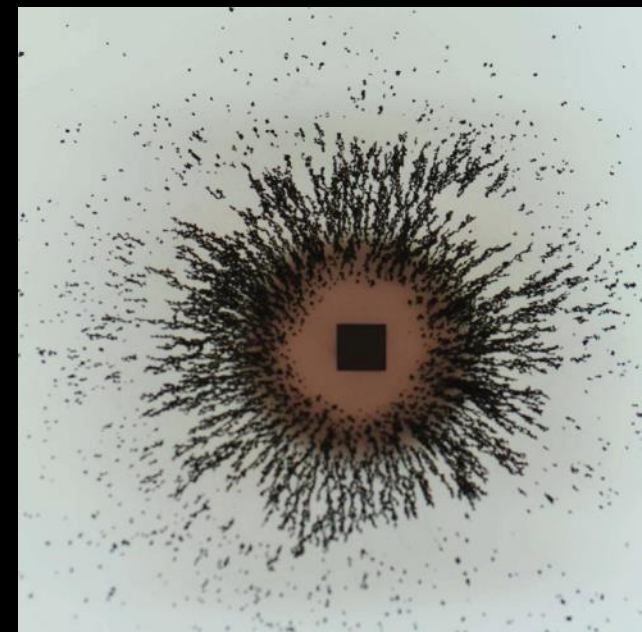
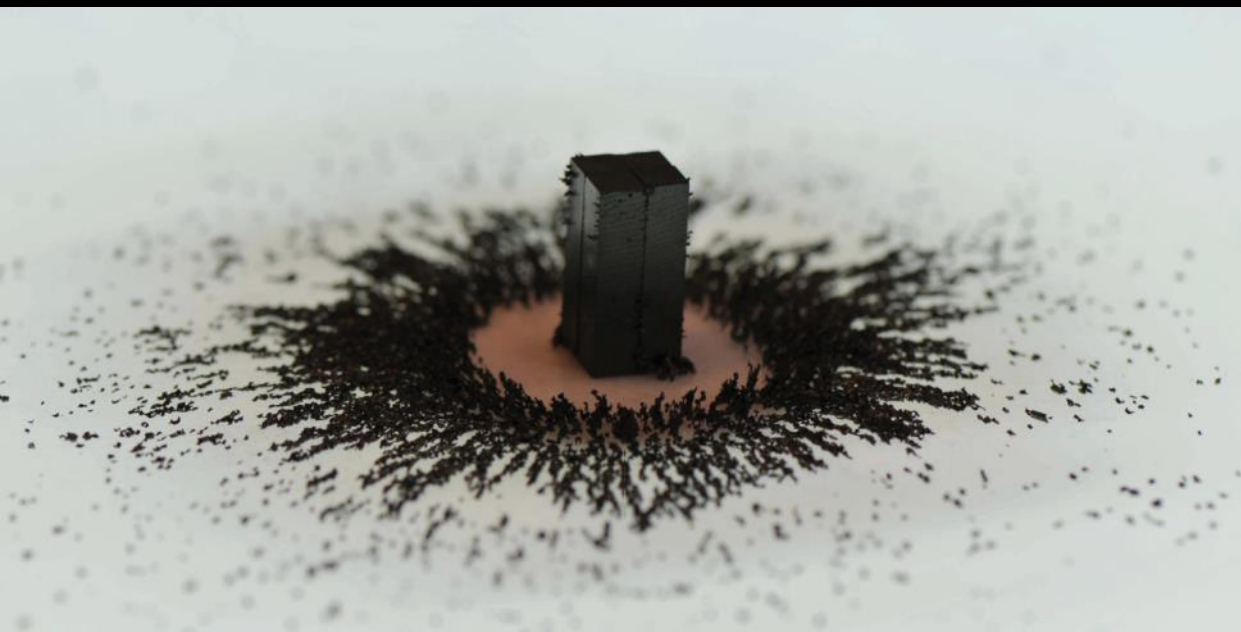
Shurooq Amin: I Like Him, I Like Her



**Ahmed Mater
(Saudi Arabia)**

Magnetism (2009)

Sculptural Installation with magnets and
metal shards

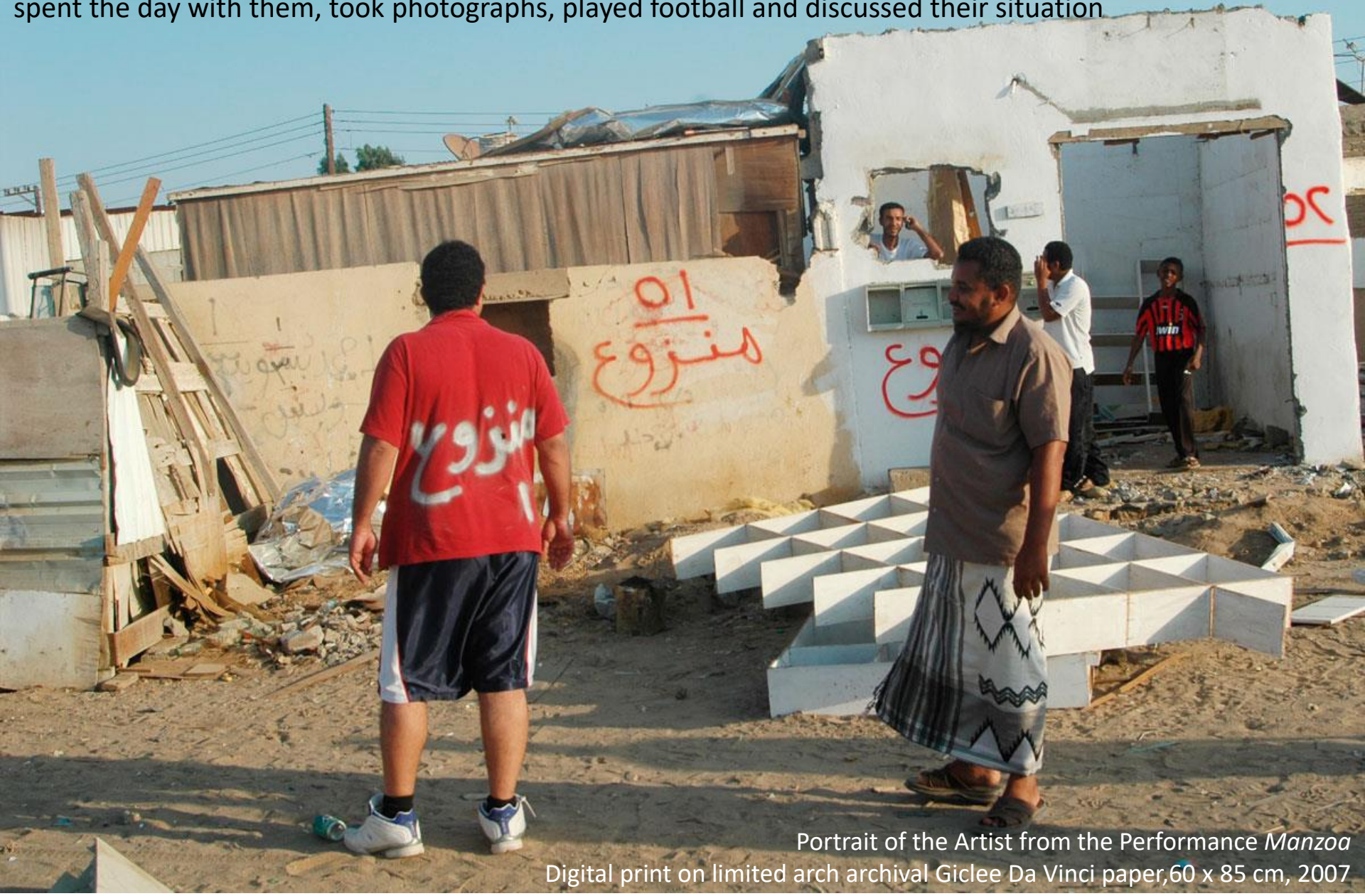




Abdulnasser Gharem (Saudi Arabia):
The Path, 2007 : site-specific project on a collapsed bridge



Manzoa (meaning *to be demolished*) is a project Abdunasser Gharem performed in a poor neighborhood of the coastal town Jizan, whose inhabitants had been paid to move out for redevelopment; but they spent the money on qat (the drug from nearby Yemen) and still hang out in the partially demolished houses. The artist spent the day with them, took photographs, played football and discussed their situation



Portrait of the Artist from the Performance *Manzoa*
Digital print on limited arch archival Giclee Da Vinci paper, 60 x 85 cm, 2007

Arts education
– primary and advanced

Resources: materials, libraries,
laboratories, studios

Art criticism, curators,
intelligent feedback

Optimal
artistic
infrastructure

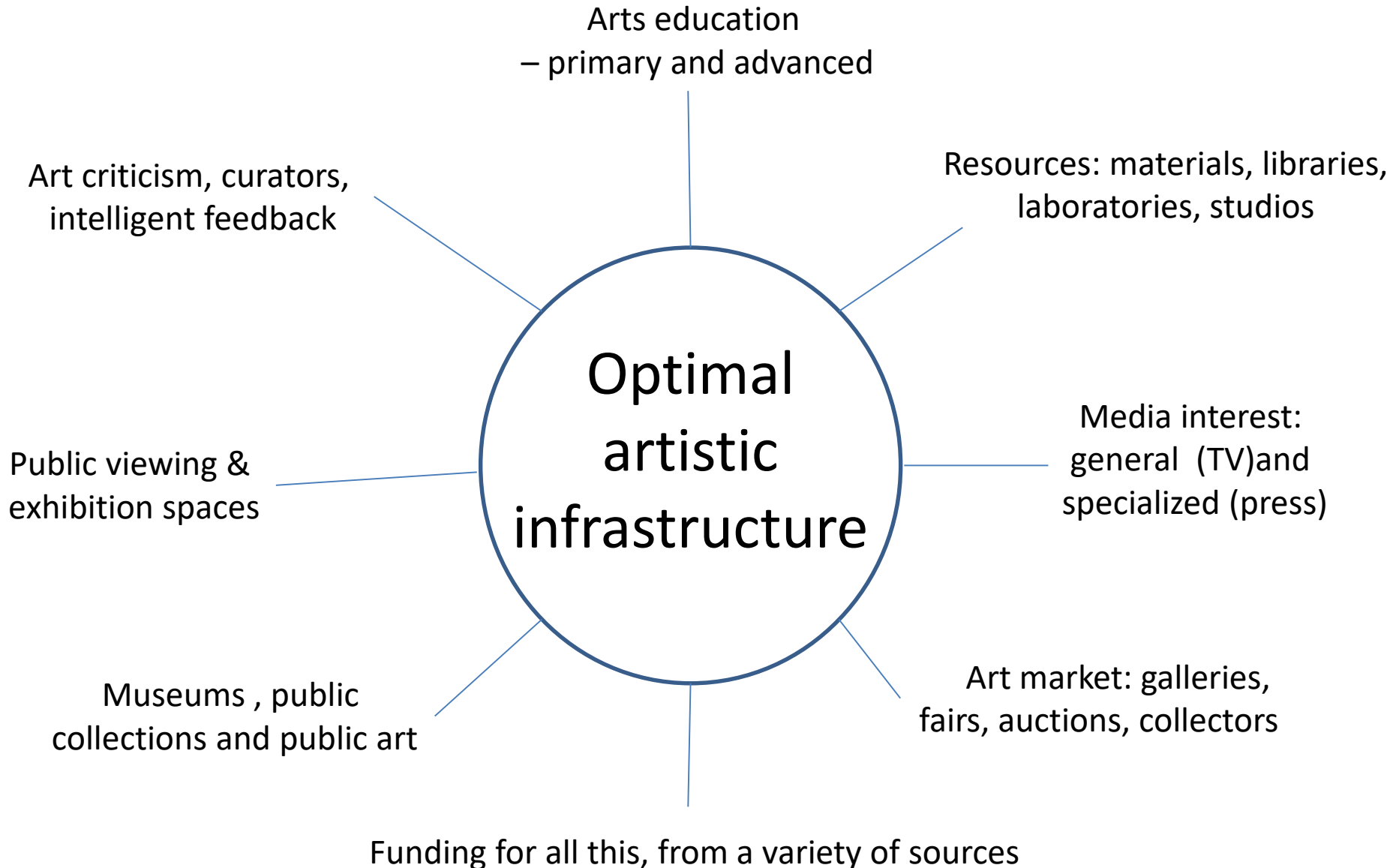
Media interest:
general (TV) and
specialized (press)

Public viewing &
exhibition spaces

Art market: galleries,
fairs, auctions, collectors

Museums, public
collections and public art

Funding for all this, from a variety of sources

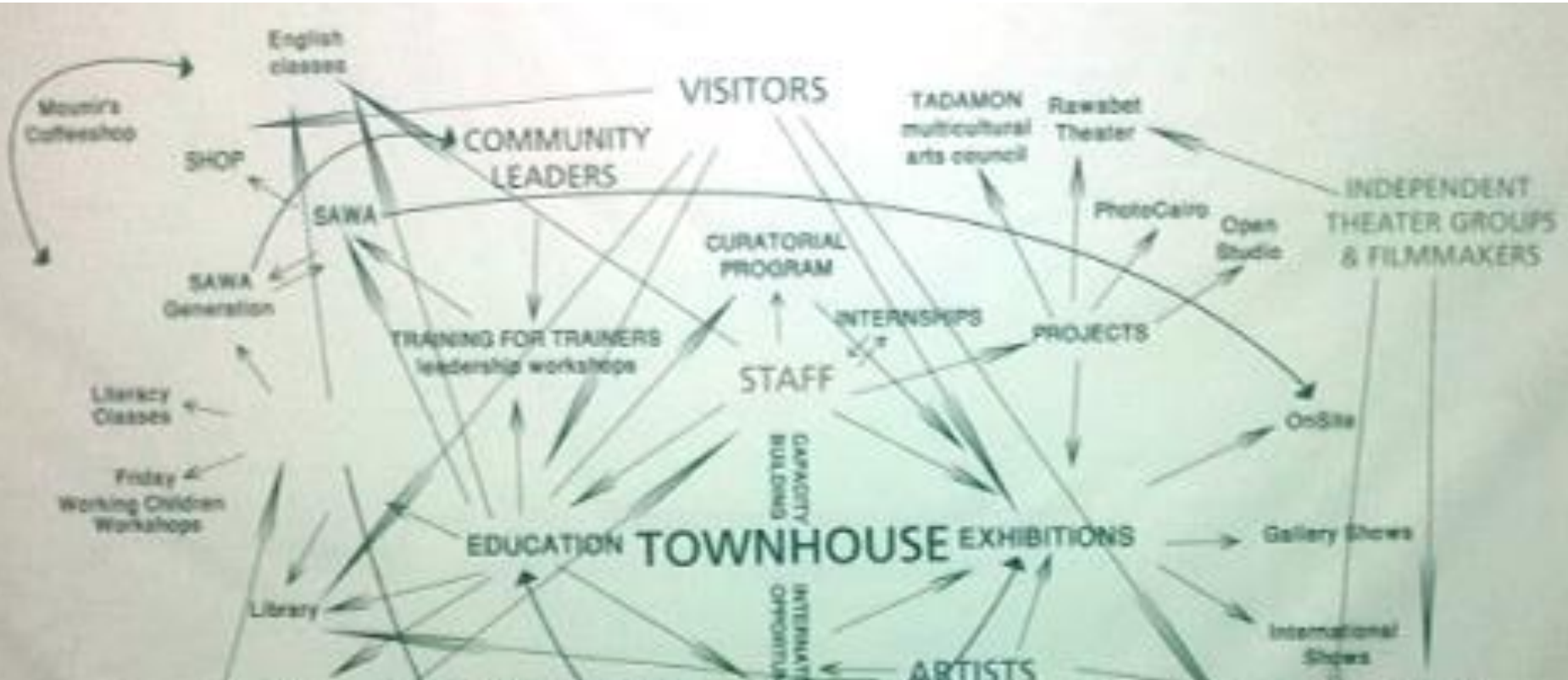


The locations of contemporary art in the Arab World



- The old cultural centers of the Arab World: Cairo, Baghdad, Damascus, Beirut are under attack; only Beirut and up to a point Cairo are surviving.
- Diaspora of artists (Palestinians, Iraqis, Syrians etc) mainly in Europe but also in the USA.
- Emerging art scenes: Arabian Peninsula (United Arab Emirates & Saudi Arabia) & North Africa (Morocco & Tunisia) while Lebanon and Palestine are still going strong.
- Focal events: Biennials in Sharjah, Beirut (Homeworks), Palestine (small) and Cairo (last one, #12, 2010-11); Art fairs in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Marrakesh and Beirut; big exhibitions

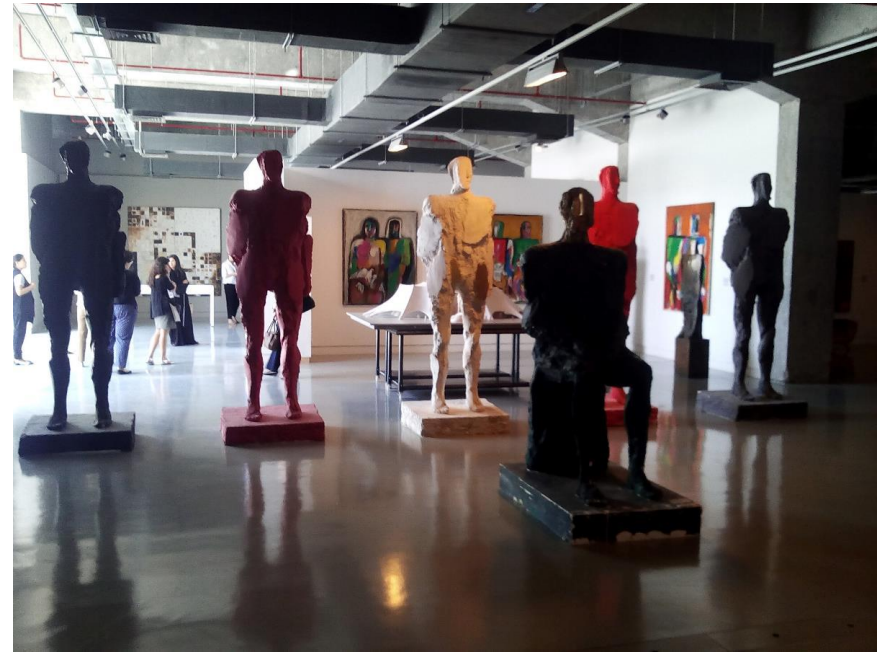
Example of an incubator of artistic infrastructure (NGO)



Characteristics:

1. Heavy reliance on foreign funding despite attempts to increase local funding
2. Attempt to fill in the gaps in local artistic infrastructure leads to expansion of activities
3. Professional management and qualified staff always an issue
4. Monopolizes or polarizes the local art scene
5. Operates in an international rather than local network of artistic production

Examples of art incubators (artists' collectives)



98 weeks in Mar Mikhael, Beirut, and the Firehouse in Doha (opened at the end of 2015)

Characteristics:

1. Low budget activities supported by local artists' community
2. Issue of evolving into NGO (to receive foreign funding) always a question
3. Focus on artistic production and exchange, for the founding artists' community
4. Attempt to link horizontally to foreign art initiatives through residencies, workshops etc
5. Requirement: a lively artistic community and minimal state interference
(i.e. freedom of association, minimal censorship etc.)

Artist in Residency programs



Aria, Algiers



Makan, Amman



Bastakiya, Dubai

Other examples of art incubators

Artist-led initiatives

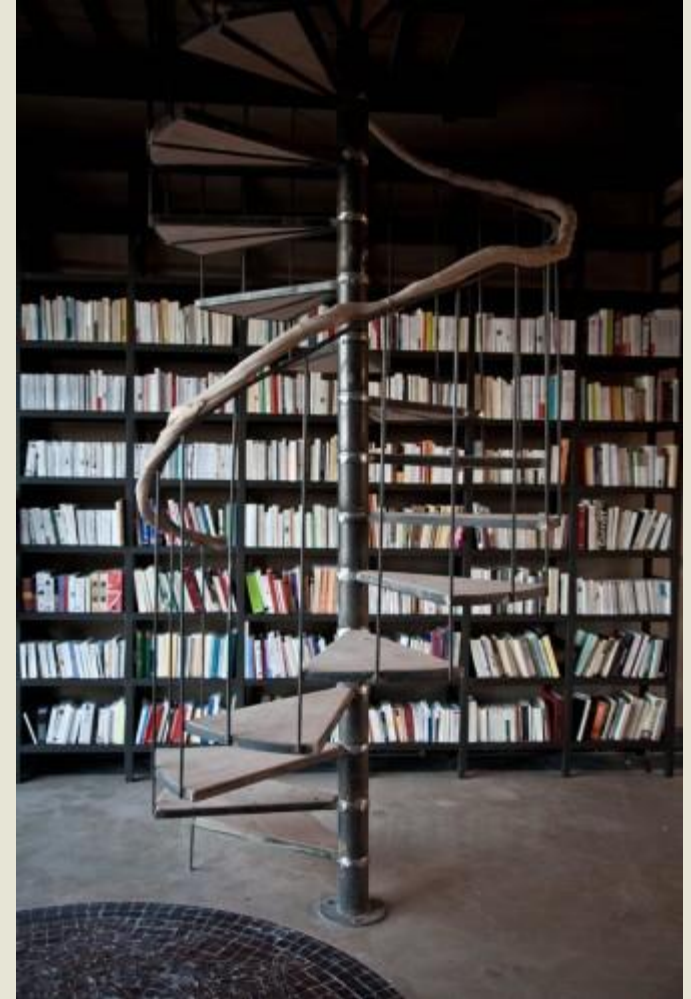
- [Ashkal Alwan](#), Beirut
- Artellewa, Cairo
- [Makan](#), Amman
- [Al Mahatta](#), Ramallah

Curator-led initiatives

- [L'appartement 22](#), Rabat
- [Al Ma'mal Foundation](#), Jerusalem
- [Alexandria Contemporary Arts Forum](#)
- [Dar al Ma'mun](#), Marrakesh

Patron-led initiatives

- [Darat al Funun](#), Amman (Khalid Shoman)
- [Al Riwaq](#), Bahrain (Kanoo family)
- [Al Mansouria Foundation](#), Jeddah (Princess Jawaher bint Majed)



Independent platform to bring art to a larger audience



Backed by private patrons and sponsors, which at its scale is unique in the Arab world.

Specific not-for-profit activities: Cinemathèque de Tanger

Established in the city of Tanger upon an initiative of the Moroccan artist Yto Barrada to 'present world cinema to Morocco and Moroccan cinema to the world'.

Rationale: to revive the moribund artistic and cultural scene in Tanger;
to create a cultural attraction point in the city centre that appeals to a large audience;
and to deepen visual culture as a background to appreciation of the arts



Specific not-for-profit activities: Arab Image Foundation

Established in Beirut to collect photographic documentation produced in the Arab World or in the Arab diaspora. Around 400.000 photographs up to date. Research and Conservation.

Rationale: to preserve the memory in a part of the world that tends to bury it. Arabs are, generally speaking, not very proud of their recent past;
& to provide a visual history of the Arab world which can function as a resource for artists



Some of the better galleries in Dubai:

Ayyam

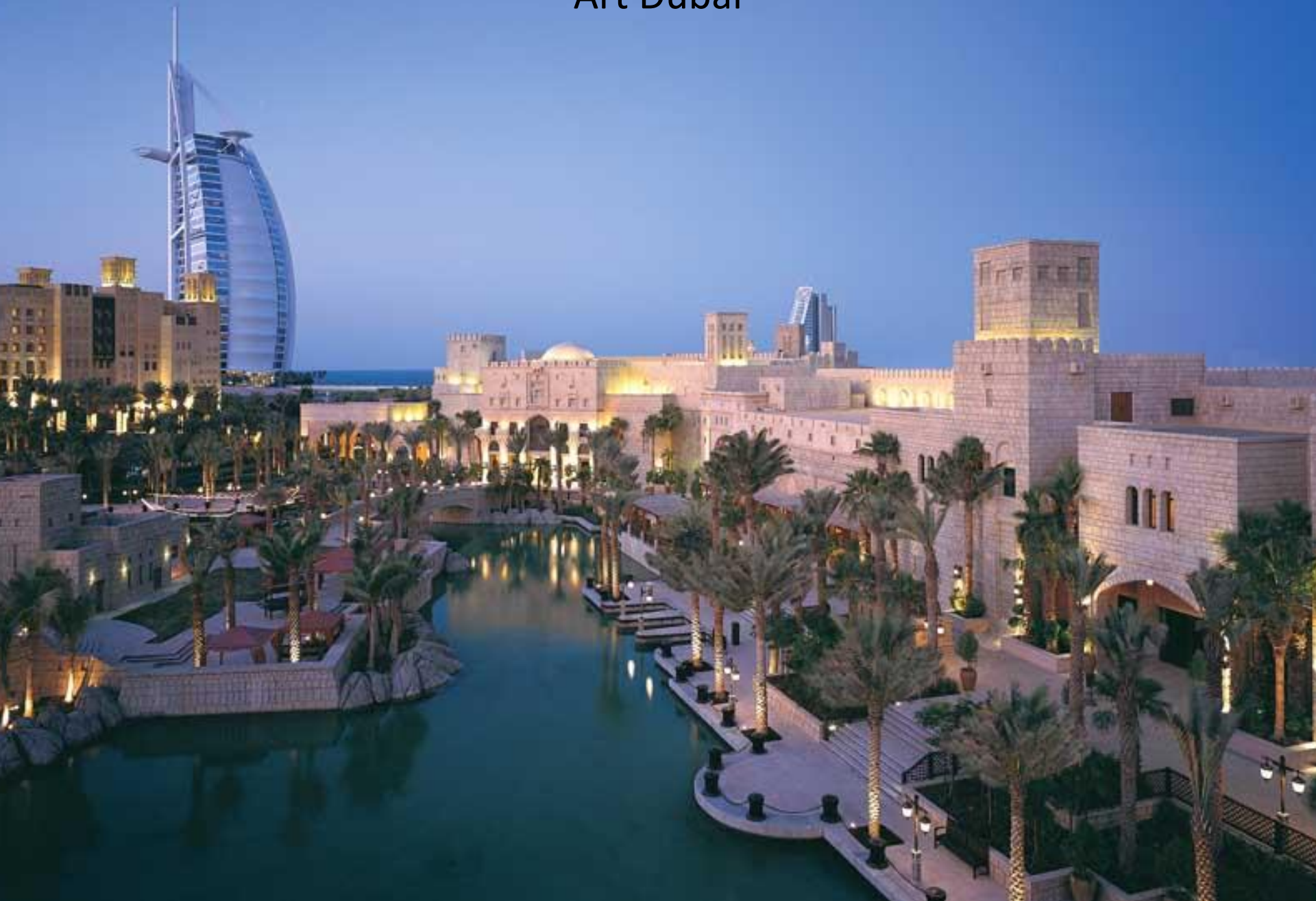


Isabelle van den Eynde

Grey Noise



Art Dubai



Creating an art infrastructure in Abu Dhabi

Sheikh Zayed National Museum by Foster + Partners

Maritime Museum by Tadao Ando

Performing Arts Centre (by Zaha Hadid)

Classical Museum (the Louvre Abu Dhabi by Jean Nouvel)

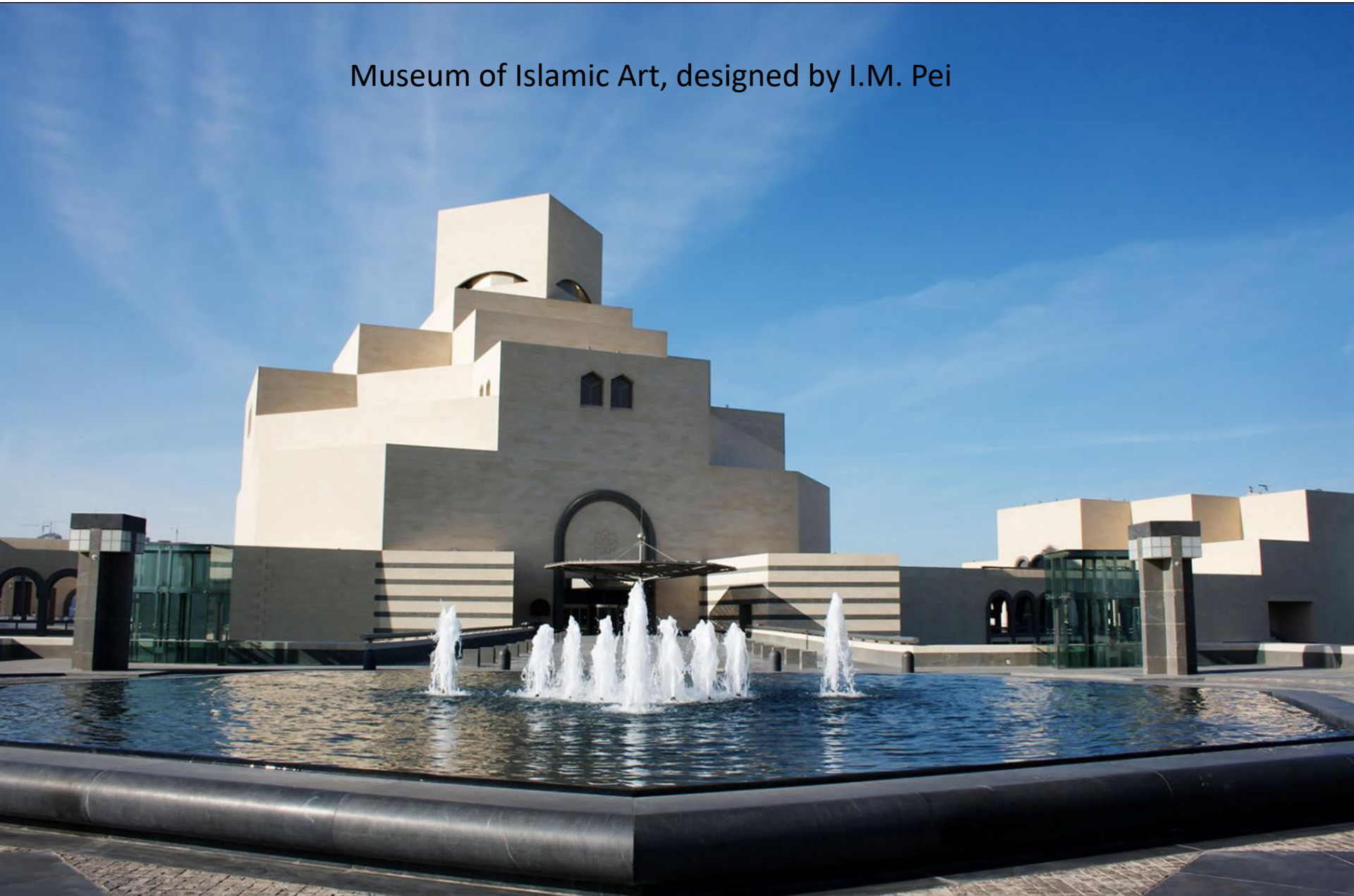
Modern Art Museum (the Guggenheim by Frank Gehry)



Saadiyat (Happiness) Island being built in Abu Dhabi

Museum building in Doha (Qatar)

Museum of Islamic Art, designed by I.M. Pei



Sharjah Biennial

Marketing the State through art?

Acquiring symbolic capital?

Long-term investment in a culturally dynamic environment?

